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ABSTRACT

New York City's three ESEA Title I, secondary level, remedial reading programs have evolved into an individualized, diagnostic-prescriptive, skill-centered approach to teaching reading, with centralized administration and supervision. They now involve 31,275 students, 417 full-time teachers of reading, and 310 reading paraprofessionals in 82 New York City high schools, and are serviced by an administrator and sixteen reading consultant teacher-trainers. Fundamental to the program is the creation of the teacher-trainer role, designed to provide resources and consultation to reading teachers and paraprofessionals. Characteristic of the remedial reading program is on-site training for teachers and teacher-trainers. The flexibility of the trainer role allows indepth consultation in reading lab organization, diagnosis, class management, materials and techniques, and large and small group instruction methods. In addition, the program encourages communication and innovation through trainer-run workshops, reading institutes, student conferences, and a newsletter. Teachers are allowed to expand their expertise through further coursework and community involvement, in the effort to bridge the gap between theory and the actual classroom situation. (KS)

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The current Title I High School Reading Programs, which are the basis of the models we are presenting today, had their origins in a New York State funded program begun in 1968 and continued, with annual modifications, for five years. The first evaluator/consultant was Dr. S. Alan Cohen, then of Yeshiva University and now with Random House. Partially because of his suggestions and partially because of the contingencies of the funding, the program evolved into an individualized, diagnostic-prescriptive, skill-centered approach to teaching reading, with centralized administration and supervision. Selected were: an administrator, Mr. Leonard Kantrowitz, two teacher-trainers, and fifty-six teachers located in thirty-five New York City high schools. The teacher-trainers were selected for their special skills and diversity of background. The teachers themselves were selected by the participating schools. The students were selected on the basis of being at least two years below grade level on standardized tests, and generally seniors were chosen first because of their need to meet diploma requirements including an 8.0 reading level. Classes were set up as reading labs with registers of between fifteen and eighteen per class. Each teacher taught five classes and was relieved of home room and building assignment to do diagnostic testing and to learn about and to develop materials. With modifications of administrative allowances, this structure is the core of the current programs.

Before discussing the programs as they now exist, let's first review some basic psychological and philosophical tenets underlying these programs and then mention some of the particular problems we faced. The premises of the programs include the following concepts:

(1) Students' strengths and weaknesses must be appraised.

(2) Students' experiences must be successful.

(3) Instruction must be based on need and presented at the appropriate time.

(4) Materials must be interesting and relevant.

(5) Instruction must be differentiated, including individualized, small group, and full group teaching.

(6) Transference of the skills must be provided for.

(7) The affective domain is at least as important as the cognitive domain.

Among the particular problems we faced were those of organization, management, communication, and supervision. The major problem, however, was the diversity and paucity of background in reading of the teachers involved. Neither New York State nor New York City has certification for reading teachers. Our teachers, therefore, have license backgrounds in subject areas as varied as home economics and social studies, and academic backgrounds in reading ranging from no credits to masters degrees and professional diplomas. Most of our teachers have not had a graduate course in reading.

The current programs, which have been federally funded since 1973,are actually three different programs. One, the largest, serves Title I students in Title I area high schools. The second serves Title I students who have opted to go to high schools in non-Title I areas. The third services those high schools affected by a local rezoning decision made to foster integration. Basically the programs are the same in design as the original program with one major exception. Supportive services are now provided, including paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, family assistants, etc.

The current three programs include 31,275 students, 417 full time teachers of reading, and 310 reading paraprofessionals in 82 New

York City high schools. They, in turn, are serviced by an administrator and sixteen reading consultant/teacher-trainers.

Two of the sixteen teacher-trainers function largely as administrative assistants handling liaison, ordering materials, paraprofessional matters, data collection and organization, and direction for publications and conferences. The other fourteen teacher-trainers are given responsibility for the organization of programs and training of staff in at least six schools each. Usually this includes about thirty teachers and twenty-two paraprofessionals. Positions are not equally distributed in all schools, and while one school may have but one teacher and one paraprofessional, another may have ten teachers and eight paraprofessionals. In schools with four or more positions, one of the teachers is designated coordinator to assist the chairperson in the organization and administrative aspects of the reading program in that school, and the coordinator is given a one period allotment.

The teacher-trainer spends 90% of his or her time in the field (in these schools) on an as-needed basis. Most teacher-trainers reach every school weekly and spend a substantial amount of time (usually two periods) with each teacher every two to three weeks. Each teacher, then, gets between fifteen and twenty periods of personalized training each term. The specifics of that training will be presented.

The criteria for the selection of teacher-trainers have included the following: successful and outstanding performance as a teacher in the program; academic credentials in reading; organizational and administrative ability and experience; ability to develop rapport with, and a non-threatening atmosphere for, the teachers and paraprofessionals in the program; and diversity of educational and experiential background to contribute to the program. For example, of

the sixteen teacher-trainers, twelve were originally teachers in the program. Of the sixteen, two have completed doctorates while with the program, and seven are currently pursuing advanced degrees in reading. The development of a corps of reading specialists, both in the teacher-trainer group and among the teachers in the schools, all of whom were fully licensed and certified in other areas, is one of the contributions of the program.

Because of recent retrenchment, however, many of our experienced teachers have been laid off or excessed, and each term we must begin anew the development of a reading teacher from a former teacher of English, social studies, or home economics, etc. For this reason, and because the lack of reading certification in New York insures the continuance of this situation, we have developed three categories of need for training. Each term we identify the teachers in our program as (1) new to teaching, (2) new to reading, or (3) experienced in reading. Keeping in mind that we want the most productive classroom situation possible for the students while we are training the new reading teacher, we have initiated a three phase approach. Phase one includes an overview and orientation; phase two stresses organization and classroom management; and phase three introduces diagnosis and remediation. With the structure we have developed, a new teacher often has begun phase three by the third week of the term, and the students' class time has been effectively used. The third phase is ongoing. Each of these phases will be discussed in detail by the following speakers. The heart of the program, then, is that a trained, knowledgeable, and sympathetic individual, the teacher-trainer, is meeting the teacher's individual needs as they occur, and proceeds at the maximum rate possible, on an individualized basis, to develop

a competent and effective teacher of reading.

ON-SITE TRAINING

A unique feature of our Remedial Reading Program is on-site teacher training. Teacher-trainers are able to make weekly visits because of the relatively low ratio of teachers to consultant-trainers.

Both experienced and inexperienced teachers attend full-day, large and small group orientation conferences before school begins. Materials to acquaint new teachers with record-keeping and testing procedures are distributed and explained. But these forms and figures take on full meaning when the teachers are working in their own labs with their students.

BACKGROUND OF TEACHERS

Those teachers experienced in reading and in lab management can get started with the initial procedures of establishing routines, arranging materials, setting-up students' folders and testing. The teachers newly assigned to the programs need instant, on-the-spot, help. This year more than half of our teachers were experienced and licensed in a variety of subject areas not connected with reading. Many had never been in a reading lab. Some believed that if students had not learned to read in elementary school, it was too late. Others felt overwhelmed by the highly structured environment they were to organize and manage. Some were really challenged and excited by the positive reactions of their colleagues in reading labs. Many were sure they would never be able to handle all the reading materials and learn the diagnostic-prescriptive approach. Teachers felt insecure and unprepared. But the major problem was not learning the materials; instead the rapid transition from formal lecturer with stand-up, whole-class lessons to informal,unobtrusive class manager became the most

difficult adjustment that many reading teachers had to make.

ORGANIZING THE LAB

The specialized situation of organizing a reading lab needs the help of an experienced colleague. This mentor may be a trained reading teacher in the school or the teacher designated by the school as reading coordinator. But always it is the teacher-trainer who is on the scene, ready, willing and trained to help the new teacher learn about reading and reading labs.

The first week of class is always confusing. Stragglers, new registrants, pupils whose reading scores are in dispute - all come to class. The teacher must match his pupils to the guidelines for the program. Two or more years of retardation in reading, residence in a poverty area and a "C" level of fluency in English on an "English as a Second Language" test qualify the student for the reading lab. Often the teacher-trainer must enlist the help of the English chairperson, the Assistant Principal and the head of the program committee to enroll pupils but not overload classes. The guidelines specify 15-17 students, a teacher and a paraprofessional. The guidelines do not specify the license the teacher must hold since there is no license of Reading Teacher in New York City.

The job of training teachers is complicated by two negative circumstances: first, there are no identifiable reading teachers and second, current administrative-supervisory school structures, do not afford the supervisor of our program the right of teacher selection. The school assigns the teacher.

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS

On the job teacher-training begins with setting up the lab. All kits, cards, booklets, magazines, answer keys, answer sheets, etc. should be arranged so they are available to the students. The teacher-trainer suggests ways of grouping materials to insure a smooth flow of traffic. Students are encouraged to get their folders as they enter. They check their assignments at their seats, get prescribed materials and begin work. Establishing proper routines from the start can strengthen any program.

DIAGNOSIS

Testing procedures are explained in conferences with teacher and paraprofessional. They are encouraged to search existing student records for any standardized reading test scores. Students who are reading below 5.0, take the Intermediate Level of the Title I New York City Reading Test. Those students reading above 5.0 take the Advanced Level. Since the guidelines call for pre- and post-testing on the two forms of an achievement test, we adapt the test results to our diagnostic procedure by providing an item analysis of the types of questions on the test. The student profile showing areas in need of improvement is put into the student's folder. Teacher and student confer to discuss the reading profile. Activities are listed for the student to help him practice needed skills.

After the first few assignments are completed, the teacher is encouraged to re-evaluate the original diagnosis. The student may need instruction in a comprehension skill. Class charts of such information help the teacher in planning mini-group lessons in various skills with a few students who need help in the same area. New assignments are made after continuous assessment of each student. Such

individualization is possible because of the limited number of students in the class.

Teacher-trainers demonstrate the use of two diagnostic tests that are given individually to students whose difficulties are not adequately defined on the items analysis. The Roswell-Chall for auditory discrimination and sound-symbol relationships and Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales are demonstrated with a student for a teacher or a group of teachers right in the classroom. Follow-up sessions are done; the teacher gives the tests and the trainer observes and interprets the results. By the third session, most classroom teachers feel able to administer the test. If they need more attention, the teacher-trainer spends more time with them since teachers, too, receive individualized instruction in our program.

CLASS MANAGEMENT

What happens to the other students while the teacher is testing absentees? What do students do during individual student-teacher conferences? Trainers suggest giving one or two general assignments on the student's instructional level, allowing students to read a magazine or a paperback, or listening to a demonstration of a particular reading material by another student who is familiar with the material. The keynote for the teacher is individualization. Establishing a quiet work atmosphere creating a feeling of independence, allowing students to choose assignments, fostering good work habits are all important considerations.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

After instruction in testing and setting-up folders, the teacher-trainer begins explanations of kits and their uses. Paperbacks

are discussed. Suggestions are made to teachers to write two sentence summaries of paperbacks for use with students. Teachers can recommend stories they have read more effectively than they could otherwise. Students can be urged to tape a two-sentence digest or reaction to a book they read and enjoyed. Each teacher-trainer has special skills and devices to entice students to read.

DAILY ACTIVITIES OF THE TEACHER-TRAINER

The trainer is not a supervisor, but is a resource. Often a trainer works directly with a student in a reading lab. Sometimes a resistant student will respond to the special technique of the trainer. Showing a teaching mode often helps the teacher learn varied approaches. The trainer makes suggestions, shows but does not order the teacher. The delicate rapport between teacher and trainer is built on active support and help, not on proving how knowledgeable the trainer is. The trainer must be supportive and non-threatening.

Planning by teacher and trainer of mini-group lessons is often helpful. After the group is selected and the study or comprehension skill is pinpointed, the teacher-trainer gathers materials and conducts the lesson. Paraprofessionals and other teachers who happen to have a prep period are invited to attend. Other information can be explained in group sessions. Forms, equipment, materials should be discussed with teachers and trainer.

Teachers are encouraged to ask questions. They make calls to central office. The trainer is alerted to return the call or make a visit. Such requests may be honored the very next day, or even the same day. Schedules of visits are made by priority. New teachers get top priority. Trainers' schedules are flexible.

EVALUATION

Towards the middle of the term, the trainer begins preparing the teacher for the evaluation process. On-going evaluation is helpful for the teacher to know the students' needs but evaluators look for concrete evidence. Since objective evaluation is measured in numbers, the post-test is given, scored and recorded on special data cards. Students whose reading has improved are very happy and the teacher feels satisfaction in work well done. At this point trainer and teacher go over the scores. The big question to be answered is, "How do we measure the growth in self-esteem and general competence that students have made in the reading lab?" Along with this question is the other query, "Has the teacher learned the twin lessons of lab management and permitting the students to become independent learners?"

Last, but not overlooked, is the job of training that the teacher-trainers have accomplished. What had meaning? Which techniques were valuable? Should forms for diagnosis or assignments be revised? Do the graphs on which students record their progress still have meaning? Are our testing measures doing the job we want them to? How can we improve, since the new term will bring a new crop of teachers, many of them unprepared to teach reading?

TRAINING FOR TRAINERS

The expertise of the reading consultant is enhanced through bi-monthly meetings held by the teacher-trainers with their Supervisor, Mr. Kantrowitz, to share experiences and knowledge. Trainers, for example, learn the details of City-Wide reading examinations so that they can act as resource people in their schools. Often workshops are run by a small committee of trainers to edify the rest of the group on a new approach to diagnosis, to new materials added to reading labs,

to research in the field of reading, to reviews of new books by experts from the universities. Often the meetings are an exchange of ideas and information among the trainers. The Glass Analysis' technique, explanations of dyslexia and minimal brain disorders, beginning approaches to reading, psycholinguistic cues for interpreting diagnosis, planning manuals for use by teachers are just a few of the topics explained and discussed at the teacher-trainers' meetings at headquarters. In addition, there are conferences with evaluators to get information about their reactions to their observations at schools. And, on occasion, an expert is invited to address the group. All of these activities contribute to the growth of the training staff's own background.

GROUP INSTRUCTION FOR READING TEACHERS

While ours is basically an individualized program for teaching reading, a strictly one-to-one relationship of teacher to pupil is neither always feasible nor always desirable. Just as our teachers are trained to give small group instruction in various skills, so do we, the consultant/trainers, give instruction to teachers individually, in small groups, and occasionally in medium and even in large-sized groups. This instruction is given by means of workshops, demonstrations, lectures, and printed material in the form of booklets, manuals, and newsletters. Let us consider these groupings in terms of their organization, purpose, location, techniques, etc.

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Occasionally all the reading teachers in a specific school have the same "free" period. When such a situation obtains, the

reading consultant takes advantage of this time slot to do the following:

Explain beginning or end-term procedures

Show the teachers how to administer, score and interpret standardized and informal reading tests

Go over new materials

Illustrate ways of stimulating independent reading

Meet with paraprofessionals to go over duties, problems, privileges, etc.

The teachers and paraprofessionals take active part in these small group sessions, contributing their own experiences, techniques and reactions.

Where it is not possible to meet with all the teachers the same period, sometimes two periods in a given day can be selected so that all reading personnel can make one or another meeting. Schools with a large number of reading positions may arrange to have reading teachers meet with the school coordinator at the time when the other teachers are attending department conferences. The reading consultant may attend the Reading Department Conference and assist the Reading Coordinator and participate as needs require.

If neither the Reading Department Conference, nor meeting during a common free period is feasible, the consultant may set up demonstrations in the classrooms of one or two teachers and invite others free those periods to observe. This demonstration might involve the administration of an informal reading test; instruction in a study skill; the teaching of a comprehension skill such as finding the main idea, making inferences, etc. Teachers may then follow the same procedures (or modify them) in working with other pupils. The consultant welcomes contributions in regard to which techniques

worked best, which changes seemed to be improvements, etc.

SMALL AND LARGE GROUPS

Several times during a school year, the New York City Title I Reading office plans all-day reading institutes held during a school day or on a weekend. At these institutes there is generally a keynote speaker who addresses the entire group. The speaker is usually a well-known authority from a local university in one of the following fields: education, reading, or psychology. The lecture is followed by a number of workshops from which the teachers and paraprofessionals may make choices, thus providing for individual teachers, according to their level of professional development. Workshop leaders are reading consultants, school reading coordinators, experienced classroom teachers, and publishers' consultants. Although there may be from 300 to 800 teachers listening to the keynote speaker, no more than about thirty teachers or paraprofessionals attend any one workshop. This structure enables the leader to devote time to questions and to stimulating discussion so that teachers can share experiences, reactions, expertise. Workshop leaders frequently distribute handouts so that teachers can go back to their schools and share information and techniques with others who attended different workshops.

In addition, at each institute other printed material is available:

Manuals of management

Sample lessons in comprehension

Taxonomies

Manuals on teaching of reading in the content areas

Manual on teaching the low-level reader (in the making at present)

THE READING INTERCOM (our newsletter)

THE READING INTERCOM

The READING INTERCOM, our newsletter, is published several times a year. It is distributed to all teachers in the program, to principals, English Department chairpersons, and librarians. We have received requests from principals, out-of-town boards of education, libraries, and others to provide hundreds of copies of specific issues to entire staffs.

The purpose of the newsletter is to keep teachers up-to-date on the latest happenings in the field of reading. We include summaries of addresses by reading experts, psycholinguists, authorities on learning disabilities, and professors of education. New books in the field are reviewed. One feature which many teachers have found helpful is called "What's New in the Schools?" Here teachers share ideas on topics such as 1) making their rooms more attractive, 2) creating games useful for reinforcement of skills, 3) stimulating independent reading, 4) teaching skills. Another regular useful feature is a column called "Reading Roundup", for which pupils submit two or three sentence blurbs about books they have read. Student-written comment is often more convincing to other students than a teacher's recommendation. We try to present a balance between theory and practice in the INTERCOM.

STUDENT CONFERENCE

Once a year the Title I High School Reading Programs present a Student Conference. Two students from the reading programs and one student reporter in each of our schools are invited to the Board of Education. Exciting guest speakers address our pupils and encourage them to develop reading into a lifelong habit. Among the guest speakers we have had in the past are: Rep. Shirley Chisholm, Congressman

Herman Badillo, Borough President Percy Sutton, and Ruby Dee. Students break up into rap sessions under the leadership of teachers in the program selected for their ability to develop rapport easily and rapidly. The pupils discuss what they like about the program and what they'd like to see changed. They give reactions to materials, procedures in class, the pre- and post-tests, and other matters of deep concern to them. After lunch, provided for them in the Great Hall of the Board of Education, they report on the views presented in each rap session and discuss issues raised within the groups. Before the pupils leave, they are given an opportunity to select interesting paperbacks for their own libraries. We learn much from these sessions. We make changes where they seem appropriate and are guided in the selection of materials by the pupils' preferences.

READING COORDINATORS CONFERENCES

From time to time we call a meeting of the reading coordinators from each school. Many of these coordinators, incidentally, were teachers in the program whom we trained and encouraged to take courses because of their skill as teachers and their evident administrative ability. Some meetings deal with clerical procedures and administrative techniques. Coordinators may submit teacher-made materials or discuss methods of securing the cooperation of teachers who tend to want to go their own way. A sharing of problems, ideas, teacher-made materials, and techniques is often helpful to all.

IN-SERVICE COURSES

Reading consultants have given in-service courses in "Teaching Individualized Reading in the Secondary Schools" and in "Teaching Reading in the Content Area". Each consultant has done work in

a different subject area and shared the results of this study and experience with teachers throughout the city who enrolled for the course.

SUMMARY

Our effort is to bridge the gap between theory and the actual classroom situation. We encourage teachers to take courses in reading, to take the College Proficiency exam which will enable them to qualify as teachers of reading in New York State, to become active in their borough reading councils which are affiliated with the International Reading Association, and to run workshops and to give courses in the teaching of reading.

In general it would appear that the on-site training given teachers in our programs; the availability of the reading consultants to help in testing, diagnosing and prescribing for pupils having reading problems; the efforts to establish the most favorable teaching situations possible by inducing school administrators to abide by the guidelines; the support and recognition we give our teachers when they are growing in their ability to relate to the students and to stimulate their interest in reading - all these factors result in a positive program.